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EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

LESSONS IN COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LIFE

THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

August 23, 1917

To School Officers:

The war is bringing to the minds of our people a new appreciation of the problems of national life and a deeper understanding of the meaning and aims of democracy. Matters which heretofore have seemed commonplace and trivial are seen in a truer light. The urgent demand for the production and proper distribution of food and other national resources has made us aware of the close dependence of individual on individual and nation on nation. The effort to keep up social and industrial organizations in spite of the withdrawal of men for the army has revealed the extent to which modern life has become complex and specialized.

These and other lessons of the war must be learned quickly if we are intelligently and successfully to defend our institutions. When the war is over we must apply the wisdom which we have acquired in purging and ennobling the life of the world.

In these vital tasks of acquiring a broader view of human possibilities the common school must have a large part. I urge that teachers and other school officers increase materially the time and attention devoted to instruction bearing directly on the problems of community and national life.

Such a plea is in no way foreign to the spirit of American public education or of existing practices. Nor is it a plea for a temporary enlargement of the school program appropriate merely to the period of the war. It is a plea for a realization in public education of the new emphasis which the war has given to the ideals of democracy and to the broader conceptions of national life.

In order that there may be definite material at hand with which the schools may at once expand their teaching, I have asked Mr. Hoover and Commissioner Claxton to organize the proper agencies for the preparation and distribution of suitable lessons for the elementary grades and for the high-school classes. Lessons thus suggested will serve the double purpose of illustrating in a concrete way what can be undertaken in the schools and of stimulating teachers in all parts of the country to formulate new and appropriate materials drawn directly from the communities in which they live.

Sincerely yours,

WOODROW WILSON

In response to this call Mr. Hoover and Commissioner Claxton are enlisting the service of educators who, under the auspices of the Bureau of Education, are preparing lessons in community and national life. The first of these appeared on October 1, and others will follow on the first of each month up to and including May 1. The lessons are issued in the form of circulars of the Bureau of Education, single copies five cents, each additional copy three cents, \$2.00 per 100, and \$5.00 per 500. The lessons are published in three sections: A for the upper three classes of the high school, B for seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, C for fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

The material consists primarily of reading to be put directly into the hands of pupils. In each case the text deals with selected topics, followed by questions and suggestions as to topics which may be studied in addition. Each lesson is accompanied by references to supplementary reading-matter.

The following suggestions are offered with regard to the introduction of the lessons into the program. They can be properly introduced as part of the work in reading classes and as subject-matter for discussion in English classes. In this connection it may be noted that the subjects taken up are commonly suitable for compositions. Secondly, the close correlation of the material with geography and history justifies the use in the grades of at least one hour a week drawn from the allotment made to those subjects. Thirdly, where a course in civics or a course in current topics is now given in the school, the lessons are available as part of the regular work. Fourthly, it is suggested that an independent place on the program for a course of this type is amply justified even in the crowded curriculum now given.

The first circular deals with types of social organization. About one-fourth of each of the sections of this circular utilizes the experience of the war to show how interdependent are the members of a modern social group. These "war lessons" take up in the concrete such topics as the following: what the war has used up; what the war prevents men from producing; new needs which grow out of the war and are met by invention.

The section of the circular prepared for use in the upper classes of the high school presents in a series of concrete descriptions the contrast between the life of a frontiersman and the life of a modern city.

The section for the seventh and eighth grades and the first year of the high school describes the life of a Colonial family as an example of a fairly independent economic unit. Following this is a description of a

modern factory and the community about it, and a description of a town produce market.

The section for the lower grades deals with the things which society makes and uses. The specific topics in the first circular are the making of cloth in a Colonial family, the water system of a town, and the collection, refinement, and use of mineral oils.

The second circular deals with production and conservation. The series as a whole deals with the economic, sociological, and civic aspects of modern life.

An edition of 12,500 copies of the first circular will be published for distribution by the Bureau of Education. Subsequent circulars will be published in editions of 3,000 copies.

The Superintendent of Public Documents is prepared to supply reprints of each of the sections of 32 pages, when these are ordered in bulk. The sale price of these reprints is to be found on the order card. Small schools are asked to consolidate their orders through the county superintendent or through the state department of education.

It is recommended that teachers secure for their own use each month the three sections. Those in the lower grades will find material in the sections designed for the upper grades which will give them the principles that they should incorporate into their teaching. In like manner the teachers in the upper grades will find illustrative material in the section prepared for the lower grades.

The arrangements provided make it possible to supply during the year to each pupil 256 pages of reading-material at an aggregate cost of eight cents, and to supply to a teacher 768 pages of material for twenty-four cents.

A CONFERENCE OF HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHERS CONCERNING MARKS

The annual school report for 1917 of the town of Stamford, Connecticut, includes a summary of the regulations concerning the marking system used in the high school. The regulations were formulated by means of a series of conferences of the high-school teachers themselves.

REGULATIONS CONCERNING MARKS

General Statement: What?

Mark: Native present ability and accomplishment.

In the consideration of which—take account of:

1. Quantity of accomplishment.
2. Quality of accomplishment.

3. Improvement (but only if measured by objective scale or standard).
4. Evidence of personal, specific, and serious purpose.
5. Evidence of initiative.
6. Evidence of supplementing knowledge.
7. Thinking—organization of ideas.

The Function of Marks: A Rule:

Frequent marks should be used solely as a guide and check to the final term-mark judgment.

Rule: The term mark expresses the teacher's answer to the questions: (a) Is this pupil able to proceed with this study or should he repeat? (b) Not "what has he done?" so much as "what *is he able* to do as [merely] indicated by past performances?" (c) Not "has he done *my* course?" but "is he capable of further growth?"

Tentative Definition of "Pass Mark":

"A mark standing for the teacher's judgment that the pupil has done creditably enough, both in amount and quality, to progress or to take work in advance—but no better."

"100 per Cent":

Tentative definition of "100 per cent": "Mark given when, in the opinion of the teacher, a definite assignment has been perfectly performed."

Comments: 1. A term's "definite assignment" implies all—the sum total—of the periodic assignments. The 100 per cent mark is therefore very rarely attainable for a term.

2. This mark, when applied to a periodic assignment (e.g., daily recitation) shall not be impaired by any fault, as in English, that should be charged to the account of any other subject (e.g., English) unless such extraneous fault casts a cloud of doubt upon the perfection of the work in the subject under consideration.

Zero:

Since some amount of "ability" and the factors noted in Par. 1 must always be somewhat present, a mark of zero is impossible.

"D" or Deficient:

A mark of "deficient" has nothing to do with the teacher's judgment of marking as stated in Par. 1—i.e., "ability plus accomplishment."

The pupil receiving such mark is in exactly the status of one who has never attempted the "definite assignments." "Deficient" means a deferred judgment of the teacher. Such judgment, when finally made, may prove to be "pass" or "failure."

Upon the records of the office, "deficient" will have the force and significance of "failure." This mark should not be considered in averaging, analyzing, or plotting marks of ability, the judgment of ability being deferred.

"R," refused or rejected, may be used in cases of written exercises that the teacher declines to consider. It may be used instead of "D" in such cases.

Scale and Steps:

a) Sixty is the most feasible pass mark on a percentile basis. Seventy-five being that in present use, however, it would not be wise to re-adopt the former scale; and it does not make any difference.

b) In term marks or for office and home records use:

Failure	Inferior	Medium	Superior	Excellent
X or D	P	F	G	E
Below 75	78	84	91	97

c) In personal record book, use any preferred scale, but for purposes of translating to office reports, use:

$93\frac{3}{4}$ to 100 = E or 97
 $87\frac{1}{2}$ to $93\frac{1}{2}$ = G or 91
 $81\frac{1}{4}$ to $87\frac{3}{8}$ = F or 84
 75 to $81\frac{1}{8}$ = P or 78
 Below 75 = X or Fail

Mark by Relative Rank:

Marks should indicate RELATIVE RANK.

Some suggestions for marking:

a) Until teachers become familiar with the steps and how to use the scale, frequent department meetings should be held, to assort papers in five groups according to the scale marks. As many judgments as possible should pass upon the papers. Five papers, representing respectively the averages of the five groups as determined by the average of the teachers' judgments, should be set aside to serve as a tentative objective standard-scale until a better can be substituted.

b) Exchange of marks and papers with other schools and departments should be effected.

c) Teachers should plot curves of their marks at least twice a year, the best self-corrective method possible for faults in marking. The following indicates the usual distribution of abilities:

Excellent—3 to 5 per cent of class.
 Good—about 20 per cent of class.
 Medium—45 to 50 per cent of class.
 Poor—about 20 per cent of class.
 Failure—3 to $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of class.

d) The principal should require explanation of each case of eccentricity or abnormality in marks.

Punitive Marks:

Punitive marking is intolerable and disallowed.

FAULTY ENGLISH AND 100 PER CENT

Comment No. 2, under the topic "100 per Cent" of the Stamford report reads:

This mark (100 per cent) when applied to a periodic assignment (e.g., daily recitation) shall not be impaired by any fault, as in English, that should be charged to the account of any other subject (e.g., English) unless such extraneous fault casts a cloud of doubt upon the perfection of the work in the subject under consideration.

By this resolution the teaching staff of the Stamford High School appears to have set itself deliberately against one of the current progressive ideas in the teaching of the mother-tongue. That idea is that language habits are best acquired and maintained in connection with content subjects; that the proper place to teach composition is in close association with the written and spoken work of content subjects. With this idea in mind many a progressive English department is welcoming themes written by their pupils in classes other than English. Many a farsighted principal is insisting that all his teachers regard themselves as responsible for a minimum of correctness in the mechanics of writing and speaking. Some high schools, indeed, have gone so far as to abolish all but one or two composition classes, substituting small laboratory groups of pupils, arranged and classified according to their composition needs. Moreover, their needs are determined by the habits of expression which the pupils manifest in all of their classes.

It is to be regretted that there are still to be found in some schools waspish teachers of history, civics, Latin, and the rest, who stoutly maintain that they have no concern with English—"that is the business of the English department"—regretted that there are school officials who allow such a spirit to manifest itself. How utterly contradictory to the facts of life such a doctrine is may be seen at a glance. A college professor's lectures on history, and his textbooks on the same subject, if expressed in faulty English, are impaired. A clergyman whose speech is filled with language irregularities is handicapped. A graduate of a commercial department who cannot spell and punctuate is dismissed for incompetency. The idea that a class exercise in any topic can be 100 per cent perfect, in spite of the fact that it contains grammatical errors, is about as sensible as saying that a man is 100 per cent ready for a dinner party, even if his necktie be missing and his shoes unlaced. To be sure, an idea is an idea, a date is a date, a fact is a fact, irrespective of the language in which it is set. But a fact is not a 100 per cent perfect fact

unless it is ready to do something, to produce something, to function efficiently. Presented in faulty English, it does not function as it ought, and therefore cannot be said to be 100 per cent perfect, nor has the writer or speaker deserved a mark of perfect.

But the perpetrators of this resolution may reply that the last clause anticipates just this criticism. Their statement is "unless such extraneous fault casts a cloud of doubt upon the perfection, etc." By assuming that the fault is extraneous they clearly beg the question. A fault in English is not and never can be extraneous to the subject-matter presented. Of course, any sensible man is willing to admit that a fault in English is of minor importance, and that the content, the *data*, the *fact*, the *substance*, is of supreme import. But the most weighty fact in the world (100 per cent perfect in itself), if faultily presented, becomes less than 100 per cent perfect in its functioning relations. Certainly the writer or speaker is below perfection.

Yet there are high-school faculties which still maintain that good English is a matter for English classes alone. They are not so vigorous in proclaiming the opposite; that bad or indifferent English is a matter often found in other classes. Too often teachers of content subjects refuse to supervise the English of their pupils because they don't know how.

HARVARD BUREAU OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

According to arrangements recently completed, the Vocation Bureau of Boston has been transferred to Harvard University. With the opening of the present year the title of the bureau becomes the *Bureau of Vocational Guidance*, and its work will be carried on in Cambridge under the direction of the Division of Education. The Graduate School of Business Administration will co-operate in the management of the bureau by appointing two members of its faculty to confer with the Division of Education on all important plans and activities. Mr. Roy W. Kelly, formerly principal of Fall River Technical High School, becomes director.

The Vocation Bureau was established in Boston in January, 1908, by a group of persons who were interested in education and social service. The idea of an organized effort to aid young people in choosing an occupation, preparing for it, and developing efficiency in it, originated with Professor Frank Parsons, of the Law School of Boston University, nearly twenty-one years ago, while he was preparing his book, *The Ideal City*. Successful experiments at the Civic Service House, in

Boston, led to the raising of funds for the maintenance of a central bureau.

The chief aim has been to prevent those costly and often preventable economic and social wastes growing out of the aimless drifting of thousands through school, through employment, and through life. From modest beginnings a varied and extensive group of activities has developed. Nearly every vocation bureau, or vocational-guidance project now carried on in this country, has profited through consultation with the Boston bureau. It was under its auspices that the work was first organized in the Boston schools. A wide correspondence is carried on between the bureau and institutions interested in vocational guidance.

The transfer of the bureau to Harvard comes about very naturally through the fact that Professor Paul H. Hanus, of the Division of Education, has acted as chairman of its Board of Directors since the inception of its work and has aided materially in developing the bureau. The Harvard bureau will maintain all the important activities of the former work and add such as it may be able to attempt under new auspices and enlarged support. It now has the following definite aims:

To carry on occupational research and to publish material giving information concerning occupations.

To continue to promote the movement for vocational guidance and to serve as a center of information on vocational guidance.

To give personal counsel regarding the problems of choosing, preparing for, and entering on a vocation.

To conduct investigations in schools or other institutions, in various lines of business, and in the industries with a view to determine the need and suggest plans for vocational guidance.

To train vocational counselors for service in schools, in institutions, and in employment departments.

To continue, so far as opportunity may offer, the co-operation, begun by the bureau through its connection with Employment Managers' associations, in solving vocational-guidance problems.

To aid and co-operate with other vocational-guidance organizations.

To be of individual and public service in dealing with the questions of vocational guidance arising from the present war.

A CLEARING-HOUSE FOR EDUCATION TESTS

Kansas State Normal School, Emporia, Kansas, maintains an active Bureau of Educational Measurements and Standards. The bureau has

just published a useful pamphlet, entitled *Announcements and Price List*, in which are scheduled in convenient form all of the leading scales, nearly thirty in number, used in measuring almost all the subjects of the elementary school and high school. Publishers and prices are listed as well. Still better, the bureau seems to have established itself into a sort of clearing-house, or central store, from which very many of the scales may be purchased directly.

THE SMITH-HUGHES BILL GOES INTO OPERATION

The Smith-Hughes bill on vocational education, passed by Congress on February 23, 1917, goes into operation in 1918. A Federal Board is created, consisting of Secretaries Wilson, Houston, and Redfield, with Commissioner Claxton as secretary, and three lay members, namely a representative of manufacturing, of agriculture, and of labor interests. This board is co-operating with a state board of vocational education, in every state which sees fit to come under the operation of the law. A federal subsidy for vocational training appropriates dollar for dollar for every appropriation by a state. The funds thus obtained must be spent directly for salaries, and in no case can more than half of the salary be paid out of these funds. The purpose of the funds is to equip men and women to work successfully in a trade, and the funds will not be permitted to be used in any other way. The funds may be used for three purposes only: (a) salaries of teachers, supervisors, or directors of agricultural education; (b) salaries of teachers of trade, industrial subjects, and home economics; (c) the training of teachers for agriculture, home economics, and vocational subjects.

Various states indicate the amount of federal aid that will be received the first year: for example, Indiana, \$45,000; Oregon, \$15,000; Nebraska, \$18,000; Wisconsin, \$39,000. Provision is made for a maximum allotment after five years based on the ratio of the state's population to the total population of the United States.

Soon after the Smith-Hughes bill was passed the *School Review* pointed out a serious danger involved, even if the possibilities were not contemplated by the sponsors of the bill. The danger lies in the fact that the federal government is seemingly throwing its tremendous influence in the direction of pure industrial skill as an independent aim in education. Indeed the entire emphasis of the bill seems to point to a dual system of schools—two systems side by side as in Germany, one for the classes and the other for the masses. It was just this dual system,

advocated by Cooley after a study of German schools, which Illinois refused to adopt; and just the system which Wisconsin has adopted. Apparently a great democratic undertaking to provide vocational education, intended to fit children directly for life-work, the plan becomes decidedly undemocratic if the schools themselves become a means of emphasizing class distinctions.

Now there can be no doubt that the danger predicted is making its appearance as the various states hasten to avail themselves of the federal funds. The public press is filled with announcements of new schools, called vocational schools, which are being projected, in addition to the high schools already established. To be sure most of the states have had the good sense to appoint state boards which are in full co-operation with the existing state educational authorities. State superintendents are almost invariably the chairmen of state vocational boards. This apparently guarantees that the vocational interests are to be administered in harmony and co-operation with the cultural interests of the various communities. Wisconsin alone has the unenviable distinction of possessing a state board of industrial education, quite distinct from state educational agencies. In spite of the apparent safety against general adoption of a dual system, we cannot help fearing that the many new vocational schools projected may point the way in a harmful direction. Let us have plenty of great vocational high schools; but let them remain integral parts of a unified state and municipal public-school system—and let every vocational school continue, like Woodward in Cincinnati and Senn in Chicago, to prepare its pupils for citizenship in the very same building in which they prepare for industry.